



A PATIENT CAMPAIGNING GROUP

Aug 10, 2022

The Department of Health in the United Kingdom plans to shelve its aim to use AstraZeneca's Evusheld to protect the most vulnerable patients in the Autumn and Winter protection programme. This is a complete U-turn and a betrayal of the people who most need protection. It also sets the UK at odds with clinical, academic, patient, and global opinion.

Instead of rapidly authorising the drug to protect vulnerable people, as with all other Covid therapeutics, we understand that the government will not authorise/approve/permit use for Autumn/Winter. AstraZeneca has confirmed that it has not been asked to reserve any stock for the UK this winter.

Evusheld is a combination of two long-acting antibodies (tixagevimab and cilgavimab). It is a drug designed to protect clinically vulnerable people against Covid in cases where vaccines don't work. A good example is people who have been on the chemotherapy drug Rituximab, which causes much worse Covid outcomes and also reduces vaccine efficacy. Another example is people with primary or secondary immunodeficiency. Evusheld is given prophylactically (that is: in advance) to stop people in this situation developing severe Covid in the first place.

Evusheld for the UK is a patient campaigning group for >2,000 immunocompromised patients in the United Kingdom. It exists to get this drug introduced in the UK with access for all those who need it. This includes roll out to all vulnerable people who are less likely to have mounted a response to vaccination

Dr Lennard Lee of Oxford University, oncologist and co-lead on the clinical expert consensus statement on Evusheld, said: "Our National Clinical Expert Group for immunocompromised consisting of >125 doctors across 17 specialities is very disappointed to hear they are considering shelving the Autumn/Winter plan to protect the immunocompromised. It is sad that UK patients will be the last in the international queue to get effective drugs and in this case, potentially not until next Summer"

A spokesperson for Evusheld for the UK said: “It is unacceptable that the UK remains an outlier in not providing this treatment and we will continue to fight hard for it. The government promised, in February of this year, that therapies would be made available, specifically to protect the most vulnerable. With the plight of 500,000 vulnerable people being ignored, it is clear that this promise has been broken.”

Martin Eve, a patient with secondary immunodeficiency who has mounted no antibody response to the vaccines, said: “I am devastated by this announcement. The government has pulled the rug from under our feet. This will mean a third Christmas of isolation and shielding; 1,000 days worth of it in December. I will not be able safely to see or hold my newborn nieces. It will mean another winter of living under the constant threat of illness and death, all the while knowing that the government could have helped us, but seems not to care.”

ENDS

Contact:-

Martin Eve: martin@eve.gd

Mark Oakley: mark@finewoodendesigns.com

Nikola Bridgen: nikolabridgen@icloud.com

Available for interview/comment request

Dr Lennard YW Lee; lennard.lee@oncology.ac.uk

Dr Yann Nguyen (by request)

Dr Tony Pagliuca, (by request)